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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 5 November 1992, at 3 p.m.

President:	Mr. AKSIN (Vice-President)	(Turkey)
later:	Mr. NANDOE (Vice-President)	(Suriname)

- Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development [79] (continued)

  (a) Report of the Conference

  (b) Report of the Secretary-General

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In the absence of the President, Mr. Aksin (Turkey), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 79 (continued)

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

(a) REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE (A/CONF.151/26, vols. I-IV and vol. II/Corr.1)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/598 and Add.1)

The PRESIDENT: I would like to inform Members that, in view of the large number of speakers whose names have been inscribed on the list to take part in the debate on this agenda item, the Assembly will conclude its debate on the item tomorrow morning.

Mr. SOMAVIA (Chile) (interpretation from Spanish): The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was a milestone of far-reaching significance in the process of seeking greater rationality and solidarity in our use of the planet's resources and in the preservation of ecosystems. Its political success, reflected by the coming together for the first time in history of more than a hundred Heads of State and Government, testifies to the important place of environmental issues on today's international agenda.

Apart from the overarching importance of the issue itself, the implementation of the results of the Conference is being carefully watched by an ever-growing and increasingly participatory public. The widespread interest of our peoples in these issues was attested to by the great number of non-governmental organizations that attended the Earth Summit and by the role that they play in domestic negotiations determining the position of each country.

(Mr. Somavía, Chile)

Clearly, the environment is one of the areas in which there is the greatest commonality of interests, and this makes it possible to mobilize the necessary political will to carry out the tasks and meet the challenges identified during the Conference and in the course of the preparatory process.

I wish to emphasize three aspects of the Rio Summit that represent major advances in our handling of these issues. First, never again will it be possible to divorce environment from development. They are consubstantial, part of the same essence. This is a concept that we have agreed on together and that we should now implement together: environment and development are inseparable issues.

Secondly, we have learned that no country can by itself solve the many environmental problems that have global characteristics. No country should continue to act alone to prevent living conditions on the planet worsening. We know that there is no alternative to international cooperation.

Thirdly, from the political standpoint, a qualitative change is taking place in our handling of these issues. No nation can ignore the conclusions and guidelines that emerged from Rio. We know what needs to be done, and we also know that we ourselves would suffer the consequences of failing to act.

The Assembly's responsibility is to set in motion mechanisms to enable countries to intensify their actions with regard to environment and development. This effort to begin practical implementation of the agreements is a challenge on both the international and national level, because it requires even greater efforts than those already made and means that we must strive to discharge the tremendous responsibility of adjusting domestic policies to the environment's recovery needs and coordinating them with other regional and global policies.

(Mr. Somavía, Chile)

Achieving our goals requires raising the level of political will beyond that already achieved, because the most serious obstacle to the whole endeavour - provision of the necessary financing for the agreements are to begin to take effect - still persists. International financial agencies should play a leading and coordinating role in supporting activities to fulfil the commitments made at the Conference, making available to all countries and particularly the developing countries - the new and additional financial resources without which none of the measures could be implemented. This is the key to the fulfilment of the Rio commitments and the urgent needs of the environment. We welcome the commitments made in this Hall with regard to finance, and encourage other countries to make similar commitments.

The spirit which made it possible to surmount the diverse problems and arrive at the Rio consensus must be kept alive if we are to succeed in implementing the measures adopted, especially the provisions of Agenda 21.

(Mr. Somavía, Chile)

We agree with the Secretary-General and with those countries that have highlighted the importance of the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development, for we believe that setting it up along the right lines will to a large extent determine whether the targets we have set are met.

In this respect we would note that its function vis-à-vis the Economic and Social Council will serve to bolster the agreed objectives of strengthening the Council, especially those of resolution 45/264. This is vital if we are to ensure the effectiveness of the Commission's work and the proper coordination of development and the environment. Similarly, it is important for the Council's future work that the Commission on Sustainable Development be an intrinsic part of the economic and social domain, alongside the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission on Social Development and the operational activities - all accountable to the Economic and Social Council. This area of the system would thus be covered in its entirety and its action in economic and social fields would be strengthened.

The proposals made in this regard by the Group of 77 are a valuable contribution to our discussion, and we believe that they deserve very serious attention. The relationship between the Commission and the Global Environmental Facility is one of the issues that need to be appropriately defined and may well determine the success or failure of Agenda 21.

The financial obstacles that the Commission may encounter in giving effect to national programmes will call for a timely and adequate response from the Facility. That is why headway must be made in a discussion of the specifications of that institution, to ensure that the right response will be made. In our opinion it is necessary to grant it the degree of universality, transparency and representativity that will enable it to meet the new demands.

(Mr. Somavía, Chile)

There is without a doubt a whole series of links and convergencies between these needs for adjustment that have emerged and the process of restructuring the economic and social spheres and the Secretariat. These connections need to be made within a general framework that will make the process coherent and ensure the bodies' efficiency and proper functioning on the basis of the new concept of development, namely, that it should be sustainable.

The developing world intends to fulfil the Rio agreements, but in doing so it will need tangible support from the multilateral system, both in the area of financing and in the area of access to environmentally sound technologies. In this great collective undertaking of implementing the commitments that we have entered into, non-governmental organizations, which are a part of our society, should be effectively involved. In particular we should try to involve business organizations, academic associations and environmental bodies which worked very closely with and contributed to the success of the Conference. We must strive to retain this flow of substantive support which has contributed so much to this process and to make possible new forms of cooperation, especially as regards financing of specific projects.

We look forward to the progress that should be made on this issue during the current session. Success will demonstrate the ability of the system to adjust to the planet's most pressing needs and will consolidate the credibility of the advantages of the new international situation that we are experiencing, now that the world is free of the conflicts and confrontation that for so long a time diverted it from addressing the priorities of human development.

We now have a great Conference behind us and a great opportunity ahead of us. We must do our utmost to realize the potential that lies therein.

Mr. ETEFFA (Ethiopia): I should like to take this opportunity to express my delegation's appreciation for the Secretary-General's comprehensive and thought-provoking report on the two important issues before us, namely the environment and development, and the follow-up on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). I should also like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General and the Rapporteur-General of the Conference for their contributions. Furthermore, my delegation fully endorses the statement delivered by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and urges all concerned to give serious consideration to the implementation of his recommendations.

In Rio our leaders reached a global consensus on and undertook a political commitment to what needs to be done about worsening poverty, hunger, ill health, illiteracy, and the continuing deterioration of the ecosystems on which we depend for our livelihood. Agenda 21 responds to the understanding that the Earth cannot much longer sustain a human species divided into rich and poor. That is why it summons the world community to join in a global partnership for sustainable development.

Realizing that the orthodox, doctrinaire development policies that led the continent to its present economic difficulties have failed, many African countries, including Ethiopia, have embarked upon market-oriented, human-centred economic systems, which involve workers, women, youth and other grass-roots organizations in all aspects of planning, implementation, management and monitoring of development programmes.

In order to facilitate the implementation of the aforementioned policies and programmes in Ethiopia, local administrative organs have been put in place with powers to decide on economic, social and legal issues, leaving only defence, foreign affairs and major economic policy matters to the central

(Mr. Eteffa, Ethiopia)

Government. As the level of governance closest to the people, the local administrative bodies can easily play a vital role in educating, appealing to and mobilizing the people to promote sustainable development as stipulated in Agenda 21.

Moreover, Ethiopia has undertaken a comprehensive programme of new economic policies and institutional reforms aimed at increasing the role of the private sector in the national economy, rationalizing public enterprises, improving their management and generally promoting market-economy principles and mechanisms.

(Mr. Eteffa, Ethiopia)

However, national efforts such as these being undertaken by the least developed countries will bear fruit only if supported by a conducive external economic environment. Their development processes will not gather momentum if they are weighed down by indebtedness, if development finance is inadequate, if barriers restrict access to markets and if commodity prices and the terms of trade remain unfavourable. That is why my delegation wishes to stress once again that the special situation and needs of the least developed and environmentally most vulnerable countries, which include Ethiopia, should be given special consideration.

The issues of development, most particularly the economic, social and financial problems of developing countries, are global. Because our interdependence is all-encompassing, they seek global solutions. Therefore, the heavy debt burden of such States and the increasing poverty of the peoples can hardly be seen as problems that can be effectively addressed without genuine international cooperation and assistance. The problem has been further aggravated in the short run by their embarking upon economic reforms and structural adjustment programmes. In this respect, therefore, all creditors should be urged promptly to provide debt relief for the poorest, most heavily indebted countries, and international cooperation for sustainable development should also be strengthened in order to support and complement the efforts of developing countries.

Another item in chapter 12 of Agenda 21 which is of considerable interest to Ethiopia is the issue of combating desertification and drought. According to estimates by the United Nations Environment Programme, 40 per cent of the earth's land area is dry land, of which a considerable proportion,

(Mr. Eteffa, Ethiopia)

i.e. 64 per cent, is to be found in Africa and Asia, where most of the least developed countries are located. In Ethiopia in the past we were surrounded by so much nature that its beauty and immensity was overwhelming. Tragically, at present only 3 per cent of what was once 60 per cent of the country is forested.

Repeated low rainfall punctuated by severe drought has caused spreading blots of barrenness in once-fertile agricultural land, producing desert-like conditions. This total loss of the biological potential of the land has resulted in the disruption of the livelihood of millions of farmers, exposing them to recurrent waves of drought and famine, thereby relegating them to a life of abject poverty and misery.

It is therefore our earnest hope that this world body duly represented here in the Assembly will, in the light of the seriousness of the problems facing the least developed countries, accord the highest priority to the organization, preparation, negotiation and completion of the convention to combat desertification, with a view to finalizing it by June 1994, as envisaged at the Rio de Janeiro Conference.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development has set up in Agenda 21 far-reaching comprehensive programmes for the decades to come. Items such as combating poverty, population policy, the relation between trade and environment, finance and technology, air pollution abatement and energy are of great importance to humanity. Our hopes will be frustrated if these programmes do not materialize in concrete action. That is why my delegation attaches great importance to the setting up of the high-level United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development to monitor the implementation of the provisions of Agenda 21.

(Mr. Eteffa, Ethiopia)

We in Ethiopia have the utmost determination to contribute our share to the protection of the global environment. We are now a signatory of the Conventions on climate change and biodiversity. We intend to be parties to the Vienna Convention, the Montreal Protocol, as well as the Basel and Bamako Conventions as soon as the procedural details which have already been initiated are completed. At the national level, Ethiopia has, in its undertaking of institutional reform, established a separate Ministry for Natural Resources Development and Environment Protection which would also carefully follow up the implementation of Agenda 21.

My delegation considers questions concerning the equitable utilization of natural resources, including international rivers, and generous financial assistance to developing countries through the Global Environment Facility to help them to address effectively the problems of poverty and their adverse consequences as prerequisites for devising a meaningful and common approach to the protection of our environment.

The two inextricably linked issues - environment and development - are global and universal in nature. This omnipresent fact is a constant reminder of our interdependence, common destiny and common future. It follows then that the various critical problems affecting our global environment represent serious threats to our world. We know that these issues cannot be addressed by the isolated efforts of individual countries, no matter how Herculean such efforts may be.

The Rio de Janeiro Summit has charted the path for global cooperation. It is up to us to tread boldly along this road with greater commitment and firm determination. In this regard, collective, collaborative and consultative actions are in order.

(Mr. Eteffa, Ethiopia)

Finally, environmental degradation is not only incompatible with sustainable development but it also threatens the very survival of us all. If we fail to act to improve the impact of environmental degradation within a reasonable time, we are not only condemning our own interests but the interests and the survival of future generations. Though our strategies might be based on national, subregional and regional needs, our actions have global implications for the whole of humankind. Let me take this opportunity to emphasize that verbal interactions to document the relevant issues of environment and development are more than commendable, and I trust that these would be followed by concrete action. It is inappropriate to view any one of the issues in isolation. Issues of poverty eradication, sustainable development and environment should be treated as an integral whole.

Mr. ADOUKI (Congo) (interpretation from French): The delegation of Congo is pleased to participate in this discussion on item 79 of the agenda, "Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development".

In terms of raising the consciousness of Governments and of public opinion, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro, was a complete success. Indeed, there was record participation by Heads of State and Government; some 8,000 representatives also participated, as well as 9,000 journalists, and 650 non-governmental organizations made very valuable contributions. Mr. Maurice Strong, then Secretary-General of the Conference, at the beginning of the preparatory process described the Conference as being perhaps the gathering of the century. He was right. Mr. Strong has had an unforgettable personal commitment to the enormous and complex undertaking of ensuring the survival of the planet, and, together with the polyvalent and effective team he headed, he has today been recognized and hailed by all delegations.

I should also like to pay tribute to Mr. Tommy Koh of Singapore for having so competently carried out the functions of Chairman of the Main Committee. And to the authorities of Brazil, I should like once again to express my delegation's gratitude for the facilities made available to the Conference.

Never before has a multilateral negotiating process aroused so much interest among such diverse protagonists on the international scene nor mobilized so much energy nor given rise to so much hope for millions of men and women as has the Rio Summit. Thus in the new world order that is coming

(Mr. Adouki, Congo)

into being, we are all in agreement today on what has come to be called "the spirit of Rio".

I should like to dwell a bit further on the follow-up to the Conference. While it is not sufficient to adopt texts, we must be clear about the documents adopted by the Rio Conference. There are three of them: the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21, and the Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of all Types of Forests. It is essential to distinguish these documents from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, two treaties that were negotiated separately but in parallel with the preparatory process. They were opened for signing and, as we know today, were signed in Rio de Janeiro at the Summit by more than 150 States. My country welcomes the fact that a majority of States signed these Conventions, to which the Congo is itself a party.

The burning question today for the international community is the follow-up to Rio. How can we translate its considerable diplomatic achievements into facts, into reality and thus bring to life the commitments undertaken to ensure the concerted protection of our planet? My delegation is grateful to the Chairman of the Group of 77 for the statement he made in that respect at the opening of this discussion. Similarly, my delegation welcomes the very instructive statement made at the same meeting by the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

(Mr. Adouki, Congo)

Along the same lines, we can agree that Agenda 21, this vast world programme of action for integrating development and environment, is a challenge. It forms the basis of a new global partnership for a sustainable environment in a world now spared the pain of the cold war and ever more interdependent. In fact, Agenda 21 contains a new concept of North-South international cooperation, one that is based on common interests, mutual needs and shared but diverse responsibilities. Its implementation requires at any rate the participation of everyone as well as the assistance of those who have the necessary know-how, technology and resources.

The objectives to be attained are specific, clear and multifarious: the struggle against poverty; the availability of clean drinking water; management of all types of forests; protection of the atmosphere, and so on. We often forget to emphasize that most of the financing for the recommendations of Agenda 21 will come from the resources of the developing countries themselves, but the financial assistance of partners from the North is needed. It is essential that the industrialized countries contribute to the implementation of the recommendations. Agreement was reached in Rio on the need to mobilize new and additional resources. If we do not have the common political will to ensure that the commitments undertaken are honoured, it will be hard to avoid disappointment and scepticism, and then the efforts of the developing countries will once again be in vain.

In adopting Agenda 21, the industrialized countries reaffirmed their commitment to meeting the target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for official development assistance. It is to be hoped that that target will be met so that the developing countries can make the transition to

(Mr. Adouki, Congo)

sustainable development. Let us recall that it is estimated that the developing countries will need $125 billion every year to implement Agenda 21.

Agenda 21 emphasizes that imagination will be required if lasting solutions are to be found to the developing countries' debt problem. With that in mind, creditor countries of the Paris Club have been asked to find ways to relieve the debt burden of the poorest and most indebted countries, in particular middle-income countries. The debt problem of the developing countries is at the present time a major handicap.

(Mr. Adouki, Congo)

Along with the adverse effects of negative net resource flows and deteriorating terms of trade, the debt has made developing countries compromise their development efforts by overexploiting their raw materials in a desperate attempt to survive.

At Rio de Janeiro it was also decided that Governments should promote and finance access by developing countries to the technology they need for the transition, on a concessionary and preferential basis. Unless developing countries have true access to ecologically sound technology, they cannot be expected to make the transition to sustainable development.

It was decided also to call on the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session to establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee to draft an international convention on desertification. My delegation supports that decision. It is time for the international community to draft a legal instrument to coordinate the campaign against desertification, for desertification wreaks havoc especially on the agricultural production of millions of people and on biological diversity.

We must also continue consultations that will lead in due course to the adoption of improved international instruments on forest management. The subject of forests, linked as it is to the whole range of environmental questions, is of paramount importance for many States.

Chapter 38 of Agenda 21 calls for the establishment of a high-level Commission on Sustainable Development. This is of special importance because it entrusts the Commission with follow-up and coordination of decisions taken by the Rio Conference. With the new approach to problems of development and

(Mr. Adouki, Congo)

environment, the Commission will be the principal intergovernmental follow-up mechanism. In deciding on its composition, the United Nations must take account of that fact.

The high-level Commission must also be supported by a highly qualified secretariat drawing, inter alia, on the expertise gained in the Conference preparatory process. It should be headed at a prominent level in the United Nations Secretariat. Expertise, here as elsewhere in the overall United Nations system, which is now being restructured, cannot come from one hemisphere alone or from a select group of countries to the detriment of other States Members of the United Nations.

The follow-up to Rio lies before us. Motivated by a spirit of broad consensus, we must now build the bridge that will link all the hopes mankind has placed in the United Nations.

Mr. MAILAND-CHRISTENSEN (Denmark): The Minister of State for Environment and Countryside of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland has already spoken on behalf of the European Community and its member States, and thus also on behalf of Denmark. I should like now to comment on a few particular points of special concern to my country.

In defining the Rio meeting as a conference on environment and development, a new an innovative approach was taken. After Rio, thinking of the environment as a narrow sectoral issue is no longer valid. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) stressed the need to deal with environment and development in an integrated way in order to secure sustainable development.

(Mr. Mailand-Christensen, Denmark)

Denmark wanted UNCED to be substantive, and we wanted it to be action-oriented and process-oriented. In terms of substance, it was successful in dealing with fundamental problems of global habitability, though not quite as successful as Denmark had hoped it would be. But Rio started a process, and the results of the Conference provide a good basis for decisive action based on a new global partnership. The implementation of the decisions taken at UNCED and the follow up to the Conference will eventually determine the real, lasting success.

In trying to solve the intertwined problems of poverty and environmental degradation, high priority must be given to addressing the question of population growth. If we do not take action on this matter, population pressure will drastically reduce the effects of our efforts to ensure sustainability and better living conditions.

The Rio Declaration, Agenda 21 and the Conventions on Climate Change and on Biological Diversity are far from the end result: they are instruments to mobilize Governments and people globally in a joint effort to obtain sustainable development in the future.

The climate Convention is a significant first step in the process of developing a global response to the problems caused by mankind. It is well known that the European Community is committed to stabilising carbon dioxide emissions at 1990 levels by the end of this decade. In addition to that common target, the Danish national target is a 20 per cent reduction of carbon dioxide, compared to 1988 levels, by the year 2005.

(Mr. Mailand-Christensen, Denmark)

Equally, the Danish Government considers the Convention on Biological Diversity to be a major step forward. Apart from spelling out the commitments and the general framework for cooperation concerning conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, the Convention addresses for the first time on a global scale and in legal language issues related to access to genetic resources and to bio-safety. We also think that the Convention reflects a good and fair balance between the interests of the developing world and those of the developed world.

Denmark signed both Conventions in Rio. We earnestly call on all countries to demonstrate their determination to take part in the global effort by ratifying the Conventions as soon as possible, and no later than the end of 1993. We see the Conventions as the start of a process leading to stronger and stronger commitments.

Considering the urgency, Denmark will strongly support the interim arrangements agreed upon for both Conventions. We are prepared to assist developing countries to make a prompt start concerning identification of inventories, establishment of national strategies and the like.

Denmark also attaches much importance to the issues of forests and desertification. The principles and recommendations in the Statement on forests should be implemented swiftly by Governments. Progress in that implementation should be reported to the Commission on Sustainable Development.

(Mr. Mailand-Christensen, Denmark)

Similarly, the request from Rio to the General Assembly that it establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification should be met as soon as possible in order to enable this new committee to finalize its work by June 1994, as indeed is recommended in Agenda 21. We are ready to take the relevant decisions to accelerate the procedure.

The interlinkages between development, trade and environment are very important in the follow up to UNCED. Denmark therefore attaches great importance to the work on these interlinkages in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), in order to ensure that development, trade and environment aspects are mutually supportive.

The implementation of and follow up to Rio will demand new and additional financial resources. Most of these will have to come from national sources, but all industrialized countries must provide their fair share of the international resources that are indispensable for full and effective implementation. The result must be a net increase in the overall level of official development assistance, leading to the reaffirmed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product as soon as possible for those countries that have not yet reached it.

Denmark has gradually increased its own official-development-assistance level, which is at present at 1 per cent of our gross national product.

As part of the follow up to Rio, we need real burden-sharing among nations - not only between North and South but also between the donor countries themselves, as was stressed by my Foreign Minister when he addressed this Assembly in September.

(Mr. Mailand-Christensen, Denmark)

The Danish Government is prepared to provide its fair share of the necessary resources, including a threefold increase of the Global Environment Facility and a substantial replenishment of IDA-10 in real terms with an "earth increment". Budgetary provisions to this end have already been made.

It is Denmark's hope that similar firm commitments will be made by other industrialized countries. We have noted with satisfaction that some have already been made over the past few days. But more are needed. Such commitments are an integral part of the new and mutual partnership established in Rio.

An effective follow up to UNCED requires mobilization at all levels. At the international level, the most significant institutional recommendation of the Conference is the high-level Commission on Sustainable Development. Much depends on how this Commission is constituted.

To fulfil its role as the intergovernmental body giving relevant policy guidelines to be followed by all parts of the United Nations system, it must have a strong, highly-qualified and competent secretariat drawing on the good experiences at UNCED. The secretariat must therefore be centrally positioned in the United Nations system and closely linked to the Secretary-General, whose personal involvement is crucial. We have noted with satisfaction the person interest taken by the Secretary-General in UNCED and its follow up.

The review and monitoring process is important also in regard to flows of financial resources. We agree with those that have during this debate stressed that this will be one of the important subjects to be discussed at the first meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

The Commission's mandate should be future-oriented. We need a long-term perspective. Only a dynamic approach that permits the further elaboration and

(Mr. Mailand-Christensen, Denmark)

expansion of the decisions taken in Rio will ensure that the process started will evolve and serve its a ms. It will also keep a global spotlight on the challenges still ahead in the search for sustainable development, as is rightly pointed out in the Secretary-General's report.

It is important that all parts of the United Nations system, especially of course the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), contribute substantially in the follow up to UNCED. In the governing councils of UNDP and UNEP, Denmark will support initiatives that will enable an efficient follow up to UNCED within their respective programme areas.

The road to Rio, and indeed the roads in Rio, were crowded with non-governmental organizations. Their active involvement was very useful. We hope and urge that they be with us also on the road from Rio. They have a contribution to make. We should facilitate the delivery.

Denmark has of course not been waiting for the result of the Rio Conference to commit itself and to act. The concept of sustainable development is fully recognized in Danish policy. As early as in 1988 the Danish Government adopted an action plan on development and environment. Sector strategies have also been elaborated in order to integrate the environmental dimension into different sectors, both in our domestic policy and in our development-aid policy. We have drawn up specific plans of action on energy, transportation and agriculture. The results are noticeable, for example in regard to energy efficiency. Despite a substantial real growth in gross national product, the total energy consumption has remained constant since 1973.

(Mr. Mailand-Christensen, Denmark)

The Danish Government has also launched an extensive aforestation programme with the long-term aim of doubling the Danish forest area.

Prices of consumer goods must reflect the environmental costs. In this spirit, in Denmark we have, among other things, introduced taxes on chlorofluorocarbons and carbon dioxide. We strongly advocate more extensive use of economic, including fiscal, instruments in other countries as well.

We are also active in regional and international follow up to UNCED. Next year a ministerial conference on the Arctic environment will be held in Greenland. It constitutes an important regional contribution.

Later this month the Danish Government will host a meeting of Contracting Parties to the Montreal Protocol in Copenhagen - a meeting that no doubt will further accelerate the efforts to phase out the use and manufacture of ozone depleting substances.

We look forward to welcoming delegations at the ministerial level in Copenhagen.

Mr. SAMHAN (United Arab Emirates) (interpretation from Arabic): On behalf of my delegation, I am pleased to extend our thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report and his important statement on the implementation of the conclusions arrived at by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and on special instutional arrangements within the review by United Nations bodies active in the economic and social fields.

The historic Rio Summit reaffirmed the international community's will to bring about a political commitment to sustainable development, taking into account the interdependence of environment and development. We believe that

(Mr. Samhan, United Arab Emirates)

all measures relating to the implementation of special programmes and policies in the fields of the environment and sustainable development should be based on the principles contained in the Rio Declaration. It should also be taken into account that it is essential to protect the sovereign right of States to use their natural resources in accordance with their developmental and environmental objectives and priorities, bearing in mind the interests of developing countries whose national incomes depend on one source when other international measures are taken to preserve the environment.

(Mr. Samhan, United Arab Emirates)

Foremost among the special steps taken to implement Agenda 21 is the establishment of the Committee on Sustainable Development in accordance with Article 68 of the United Nations Charter. It should be considered as one of the mechanisms of international economic cooperation as its mandate is to implement the recommendations and resolutions of UNCED, in a manner that would ensure complete harmony with other operational activities.

We are fully confident that the principle of equitable geographic distribution will be the basis of establishing the Committee on Sustainable Development and that this will be done within the framework of restructuring the United Nations in the economic and social fields, with a view to setting priorities in a manner that would prevent competition and duplication between the bodies that are active in that field.

We have become more keenly aware over the past few years of the interrelationship between the state of the environment and social and economic development. Undoubtedly, the success of international efforts in dealing with environmental problems throughout the world and in elaborating a long-term strategy for sustainable development will depend directly upon our ability to address other issues related to economic and social development in the developing countries, such as poverty, famine and underdevelopment, together with the other obstacles which face those countries and prevent them from preserving their environment.

The developing countries will not be able to play their full role in this field unless they become the recipients of environmentally sound and safe technologies that would enable them to benefit from scientific progress and to put those modern and updated technologies in the service of their environmental and developmental interests and the restructuring of their

(Mr. Samhan, United Arab Emirates)

institutions at both the national and regional levels. If that objective is to be achieved, the developed countries should provide the necessary and adequate financial assistance needed to implement the programmes of Agenda 21. They should also adopt economic policies which may create an appropriate economic climate that would lead to economic and social development.

Recent events have demonstrated that armed conflicts and the stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction pose grave threats to the environment of the world we live in. In that regard, the solutions to the principal problems that beset our world, proposed by the Secretary-General in the "Agenda for Peace", must be viewed as part and parcel of the overall international endeavour to preserve the environment, particularly since they have been underscored by the Rio Declaration.

Given its special geographic location, the United Arab Emirates has a special interest in chapter 12 of Agenda 21 on combating desertification and drought. We have gained a great deal of technical expertise in this field and hope to expand and enhance this through the exchange of experiences and technical information with all other countries and United Nations bodies active in that field within the context of the programme of combating desertification and drought. In that regard, we support the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification, preserve the environment, and achieve sustainable development in developing countries, particularly those of the African continent.

In addition to our concern with combating desertification and drought, we have also given special attention to the environment and development by protecting, preserving, maintaining and developing our marine and land

(Mr. Samhan, United Arab Emirates)

resources. In view of the strong link between living standards and the environment, the State - through its information programmes and by increasing national awareness of the dangers of environmental pollution - has consistently encouraged all organizations and individuals to preserve the environment, through training, research and the strengthening of our national capabilities in this area.

On the regional level, the problems of the marine environment have also been accorded special attention through participation in the establishment of the Regional Organization for Preserving the Marine Environment of the Arabian Gulf. We view environmental pollution in the Gulf with special concern as the Gulf is a heavily used sea route and a marine environment that has suffered the effects of the armed conflicts that have taken place in it. The consequences of war in that region transcend all boundaries and affect other areas of the world.

In the light of all this, my country has always called for providing that area with the necessary environmental protection and, on every regional and international occasion, has called for sparing the region the effects of disputes and conflicts through the settlement of disputes by peaceful means in consonance with the United Nations Charter and the norms of international law.

Finally, I should like to reiterate my country's interest in participating effectively in and contributing to all international efforts aimed at preserving the environment at both the international and regional levels and in implementing Agenda 21 for the sake of present and future generations.

Mr. MAYAKA (Kenya): It is my great pleasure to have this opportunity to address this plenary meeting of the forty-seventh session of

(Mr. Mayaka, Kenya)

the General Assembly focusing on the follow-up to the decisions and recommendations made during the Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held last June in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The holding of UNCED in Rio de Janeiro and the preparation that preceded it were a reaction to the deep concerns worldwide that the continuing deterioration of the environment threatened the very survival of the human race and planet Earth. The international community demanded a halt to the increasing threats to the environment occasioned by man's unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. The agreements reached in Rio represent a remarkable achievement despite the fact they did not meet the hopes and expectations of developing countries in all areas. None the less, what is important is that the results of the Rio Earth Summit - contained in the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21 and the two Conventions - provide the basis for a new global partnership embracing the rich and the poor in the North and the South.

The Earth Summit in Rio had one common purpose. All participants went to Rio to find ways and means of integrating effectively the environmental and developmental concerns that affect us all. In other words, they all came together to seek and agree on the most effective ways of fostering international cooperation for the achievement of sustainable development. We in Kenya are determined to play our part towards this objective in order to ensure that the needs of the present will be met without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs.*

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* Mr. Nandoe (Suriname), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Mayaka, Kenya)

Among the many important provisions contained in Agenda 21, chapter 38.11 states that in order to ensure the effective follow-up of the Conference, as well as to enhance international cooperation and rationalize the intergovernmental decision-making capacity for the integration of environment and development issues and to examine the progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 at the national, regional and international levels, a high-level Commission on Sustainable Development should be established. This Commission would report to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and would consist of representatives of States elected as members with due regard to equitable geographical distribution. Representatives of non-member states of the Commission would have observer status.

The position of the Group of 77, of which Kenya is a member, is clearly spelt out in the Group's position paper on the post-UNCED institutional arrangements, which has already been circulated. The views of the Group were well presented to the Assembly in the statement by its Chairman, the representative of Pakistan. The position of the Group on the various organizational modalities of the Commission, such as its composition, functions, relations with financing sources and mechanisms, transfer of technology, relations with the United Nations system and secretariat support, have been formulated to enable the Commission to fulfil the complex task of assisting Member States in integrating issues on environment and development for the improvement of the welfare of humanity. We are very hopeful that our partners in development will contribute to the enrichment of the proposals of the Group of 77.

The report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/47/598 states,

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"The role of the Commission would be to ensure in-depth consideration of all issues related to the implementation of Agenda 21 and to provide advice and policy recommendations to the Council and through it to the General Assembly. ... The Commission's recommendations on the implementation of Agenda 21 by intergovernmental organizations both within and outside the United Nations system would, in particular, assist the Council in effectively discharging its Charter functions related to system-wide coordination in general, as well as its specific responsibilities for overseeing and directing 'system-wide coordination and integration of environmental and developmental aspects of United Nations policies and programmes'". (A/47/598, para. 37)

We fully endorse the Secretary-General's emphasizing in his report that "a clear division of responsibilities between the Commission and the [bodies that address issues relating to sustainable development] and the establishment of optimal reporting patterns are essential", (ibid., para. 34)

and this should be done during this session of the Assembly.

As the Secretary-General's report has also pointed out,

"In order to serve as the focal point of intergovernmental decision-making for the integration of environment and development issues within the United Nations, the Commission should build its work on that of all appropriate sectoral intergovernmental subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council that address issues related to sustainable development, and elaborate on that basis comprehensive and coherent policy recommendations to the Council and, through it, to the General Assembly." (ibid., para. 34)

(Mr. Mayaka, Kenya)

My delegation deems it especially important, as emphasized by the Secretary-General's report, that

> "The Commission should draw in particular upon the activities of UNEP and UNDP, as well as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) which, in accordance with Agenda 21 should play a crucial role in the follow-up to the Conference." (ibid., para. 35)

Thus, as the Secretary-General concludes,

> "In the implementation of the Conference outcome, in particular Agenda 21, there will be need for close interaction between the Commission and the governing bodies of these programmes in a way that is mutually reinforcing." (ibid.)

It is the responsibility of the General Assembly at this session to ensure that the organizational modalities of the Commission, its functions and its secretariat support encourage rather than hinder the effective contribution and functioning of other bodies.

In this respect it is noteworthy that UNCED provided, in Chapter 38.21 of Agenda 21, that in the follow-up to the Conference, there would be a need for an enhanced and strengthened role for UNEP and its Governing Council. Further, the Governing Council should, within its mandate, continue to play its role with regard to policy guidance and coordination in the field of the environment, taking into account the development perspective. To enable UNEP to continue effectively to fulfil its mandate in addition to concentrating on the priority areas assigned it by UNCED, it is important that measures be urgently taken to provide it with the resources it needs and deserves. In this regard, Kenya joins those delegations that have already called for additional resources to be made available to enable UNEP to play its full role in the implementation of Agenda 21.

(Mr. Mayaka, Kenya)

With regard to chapter 28.4 of Agenda 21, covering the initiatives of local authorities in support of Agenda 21, UNCED stresses the importance of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), among other relevant partners, in mobilizing increased international support for local authority programmes. Habitat and other relevant organs and organizations of the United Nations system are called upon to strengthen services in collecting information on strategies of local authorities, especially for those that need international support. This puts Habitat at the centre of local authority capacity-building and local environment management in making improved and affordable shelter available to all.

In our view, nothing could contribute more to sustainable development than finding solutions to the problems faced by millions of people who today have no shelter. The efforts made so far by Habitat and recognized by UNCED should be fully supported in order to solve the problem by the year 2000. This is possible if the required political will, particularly by the developed countries, is put into action, as should especially be done during the preparations for the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, to be held in 1996. The preparations and outcome of the Conference should also be among the priority issues to be considered by the Commission on Sustainable Development. We also attach great importance to the work the Commission will undertake, closely related to shelter, in programmes under Agenda 21 concerning the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development - particularly trade - and also combating poverty, changing consumption patterns of developed countries, demographic dynamics and sustainability and promotion of human health.

I wish to recall that, although a general agreement was finally reached at UNCED, delegations, mainly from developing countries, were not satisfied

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with the arrangements relating to financial resources and mechanisms for implementing Agenda 21. Indeed, the entire question of financing for environment and development generated much debate and controversy throughout the deliberations. There were no firm financial commitments for the implementation of actions and programmes. Without these commitments, Agenda 21 will not be able to achieve its objectives.

With regard to the Global Environment Facility, my delegation calls for its immediate restructuring to encourage universal participation. This will ensure its management will be transparent and democratic and that there will be a continued flow of funds from developed countries. Such restructuring will have the positive effect of ensuring access to and disbursement of funds under mutually agreed criteria without necessarily introducing new forms of conditionality. The Facility should also exercise sufficient flexibility to expand its scope and coverage to relevant programmes of Agenda 21 with global benefits.

(Mr. Mayaka, Kenya)

Sustainable development requires the worldwide development and dissemination of technologies that are environmentally sound. The development of these technologies should be achieved through long-term partnership and cooperation involving joint efforts by private enterprises and Governments as suppliers and recipients of technology. Access and transfer of these technologies and the capacity to develop and manage them are of particular importance to developing countries. Support should be provided to build the technological capacity of developing countries so that they can make more rational choices of technology relevant to their development

With regard to the issues of terms of transfer, protection of intellectual property rights, and concept and modalities of assured access to environmentally sound technologies by the developing countries, my delegation's views are fully reflected in the stand taken by the Group of 77 at the conclusion of the Rio Conference.

The international community acknowledges the dangers of the continuing spread and intensification of drought and desertification in various parts of the world. The Conference invited the General Assembly at its current session to establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification, particularly in Africa, with a view to finalizing such an instrument by June 1994. Kenya feels that the intergovernmental negotiating committee to be established by the General Assembly must be provided with all the financial and secretariat support necessary to enable it to complete its complex task in time. The experience gained by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) through its research and practical application of its research findings and the accumulated strength of scientific monitoring and environmental-impact assessments

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in all countries affected by drought and desertification at the global level should be fully utilized; this would be to the benefit of Member States. UNEP's long-standing role in this respect should be recognised.

The commitment of the Government of Kenya to matters of environment and development was illustrated by His Excellency President Daniel arap Moi when he signed both the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change at Rio. The Convention on Biological Diversity is of particular significance and interest to developing countries, since it is an agreement with regard to which they have something specific to offer and for which they will get a fair return. However, the Framework Convention on Climate Change fell short of the expectations of many developing countries. In this respect some developed countries did not commit themselves to specific timetables and targets for the stabilization and subsequent reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases. We hope that those commitments already made will be strengthened as more scientific data become available.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that Agenda 21, the principal outcome of the Rio Conference, requires a maior shift in the priorities of Governments and peoples involving the full integration of the environmental dimension into economic policies and decision-making in every sphere of activity. It will require global partnership to set the world community onto a new course for a more sustainable, secure and equitable future as we move into the twenty-first century. It is therefore important that at its forty-seventh session the General Assembly endorse the decisions and recommendations of the Rio Conference, for it will go down in the annals of history as the most comprehensive international effort mobilized so far to save our Planet Earth.

Mr. MOLDAN (Czechoslovakia): The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the Rio Earth Summit, held last June, represents an important step in a global process towards sustainable development, poverty reduction and environmental protection. Without proper respect for the carrying capacity of the Earth, for the true value of nature and natural capital, there can be no prospects for environmentally sound economic development. A new regard for nature's value, more rational use of natural resources and effective protection of the biosphere life-support systems can show us a new way to a sustainable economy.

Those conclusions were expressed in Rio at the highest political level. The widest commitment to sustainable development was based on a shared responsibility and a new partnership.

We agree with the UNCED Secretary-General's demand that the institutional arrangements for addressing these issues must be innovative in nature and take these considerations into account to ensure that the promise generated in Rio is realized. We support the creation of a high-level Commission on Sustainable Development. We would like to emphasize the importance of its role in providing a new global forum for political discussions and policy guidance on major issues of sustainable development. The Commission will also have an important function in implementing the conclusions of the Earth Summit as well as in integrating environment and development into the whole United Nations system. We also support the idea that the Commission should be very close to the Economic and Social Council and that it should be located, together with its small supporting secretariat, at Geneva, which would facilitate the effective coordination of United Nations activities in the broad field of environment and development.

(Mr. Moldan, Czechoslovakia)

However, there are a number of issues which must be solved. I hope the following points will be helpful.

First, in our opinion the Commission on Sustainable Development should, at least on certain issues, have direct connections with the General Assembly.

Secondly, its membership should be distributed geographically in a manner similar to the membership of the Economic and Social Council. We also recommend that the relevant United Nations agencies and programmes be represented, as well as the Bretton Woods institutions. Experts knowledgeable about environment and development, designated by the Commission's Secretary-General, should also contribute to the work of the Commission. Included among them should be representatives of non-governmental organizations.

Thirdly, the Commission's mandate should be elaborated as soon as possible. Its main task should be the provision of an appropriate intergovernmental forum for exchanges of information on national and multilateral experience in implementing UNCED documents and reviewing such implementation.

Fourthly, we would like to recommend building on the experience of the very successful secretariat of the Conference. In particular, we have in mind further exploitation of the national reports and other relevant documents prepared for UNCED. The duties of the Commission should include the preparation of an annual world report on sustainable development, which might combine the expertise of UNEP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and other international institutions, including such non-governmental organizations as the World Resources Institute. All of

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these, as well as others, issue annual or biannual reports. For the new report on sustainable development, an advanced set of indicators should be devised. It would be of great advantage to use the existing network of the United Nations regional offices and institutions, which could provide the necessary data. In addition, the existing regional and global monitoring systems should be used for this purpose. Thus, the preparation of the report might contribute to the integration and coordination of numerous international efforts that partly overlap. The world report on sustainable development should show the status of human development in individual countries and regions and the state of the biospheric realms and natural capital of Planet Earth.

(Mr. Moldan, Czechoslovakia)

Fifth, another important element of the Commission's mandate should be a differentiated assistance to countries or groups of countries which would ask for such assistance, which could include, inter alia guidelines for the implementation of specific chapters of Agenda 21. We have particularly in mind these groups of countries: first, the former socialist centrally planned countries of Central and Eastern Europe; secondly, non-European developing centrally planned socialist countries; and, thirdly, developing mixed-economy countries with a centrally managed economic system.

Sixth, and last, we feel that the creation of national focal points for the implementation of Agenda 21 and for general contacts with the Commission on Sustainable Development will be inevitable.

I hope that with these remarks we have contributed to the successful creation of the Commission, which we see as an extremely urgent task.

The Czech and Slovak Federal Republic is ready to share the common responsibility in attaining the goals set in Rio. The path to sustainable development is an extremely difficult one, but we have a good blueprint in Agenda 21 and other documents prepared in Rio. As the road is long and arduous, it is important that our objectives be clear.

Mr. ANOH (Côte d'Ivoire) (interpretation from French): The delegation of the Côte d'Ivoire is pleased at this opportunity to speak on this agenda item and to reaffirm all the hopes our country has placed in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

Without any doubt, the Rio Summit - in its preparation and during the Conference itself - has been an historic event because of what was at stake and because of the decisions that were adopted.

(Mr. Anoh, Côte d'Ivoire)

A symbol of political will and an expression of solidarity between peoples, the Earth Summit made it clear that there is but one world, and that, faced with its deterioration, efforts to save it must be united. Inspired with this fate, the representatives of States in Rio were able to lay the bases for new forms of ecologically sustainable and socially equitable development.

It was from that standpoint that Côte d'Ivoire joined other members of the international community in adopting the Declaration of Rio on Environment and Development, the statement on forest principles and Agenda 21, which embodies recognition of everyone's fundamental right to water, air, nature and health for present and future generations. It is also in this spirit that Côte d'Ivoire signed the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

For my country, these two Conventions are decisive steps in the establishment of a framework for cooperation the purpose of which, in respect to the Convention on Biological Diversity, is to protect all forms of life on Earth and, in respect of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, to maintain acceptable limits for emissions of greenhouse gases.

In Rio, Côte d'Ivoire had an opportunity to point out that the protection of its rich fauna and flora heritage is very closely linked to the imperative need to ensure its food and energy security.

Indeed, our development is in fact based mainly on agriculture. Threats to our environment come from weak export earnings for our agricultural products. Either we produce more by increasing the area under cultivation to the detriment of our forests, only to be offered low prices for our agricultural products, or we cope with debt payments while at the same time importing at very high cost agricultural products and energy resources we do

(Mr. Anoh, Côte d'Ivoire)

not produce. That is the dilemma we are now facing; it can be solved only if our agricultural products are purchased on the international market at fair and profitable prices.

In recalling here the stakes and challenges identified at the Rio Conference, as well as the concerns of my country, I must also welcome the hopes for international cooperation that were also expressed in the decisions adopted by the Conference. For my country, the Rio Conference will have true historic meaning only if it is followed by post-Rio action - that is to say, if the decisions taken are translated into specific commitments. Côte d'Ivoire is pleased with all the financial and institutional measures that were envisaged in order to ensure an effective follow-up to the Rio Conference.

In that regard, we believe that the Global Environment Fund is one of the indispensable financial mechanisms for multilateral assistance to developing countries.

I should like to point out here that it is an honour for my country to host in Abidjan, next December - in exactly one month - the fourth meeting of the Assembly participants. I can assure members that my country will honour its commitments in organizing that Assembly in order to ensure its success.

However, Côte d'Ivoire would like to see a reform in the structures of the Fund in order to improve its transparency and achieve better representation by all countries, in particular developing countries.

Furthermore, my country places great hopes in the high-level Commission on Sustainable Development, conceived as an internal structure of the United Nations system and one of the follow-up mechanisms for the implementation of Action 21. However, the Commission will be effective only if its mandate is

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well defined vis-à-vis the other intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations, its composition is truly representative and its functioning effective.

For our part, we believe that first, the high-level Commission on Sustainable Development must be an appropriate support structure which will not replace other existing multilateral and bilateral cooperation mechanisms.

Secondly, its composition must meet the concern widely expressed in Rio for open participation and transparent participation, taking into account representation by all countries according to equitable geographical distribution.

And, thirdly, since the high-level Commission on Sustainable Development is to report to the Economic and Social Council on substantive issues of environment, it would stand to gain if it were to better define the meaning of the "high-level" of its representatives, in the sense of making its operations more effective.

The General Assembly is now called upon to meet the challenges and fulfil the hopes of the international community, which expects to see the decisions of the Rio Conference translated into specific commitments. The high-level Commission on Sustainable Development thus represent both one of these challenges and the hope of the post-Rio period.

Mr. YAÑEZ BARNUEVO (Spain) (interpretation from Spanish): Allow me first of all, Sir, to associate my delegation with the statement of the United Kingdom's Minister of State for the Environment, Mr. David MacLean, on behalf of the European Community and its member States.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in June of this year, was incontestably a historic milestone, owing both to the large number of Heads of State or Government that attended and to the importance of the agreements reached.

In Rio de Janeiro the Conference articulated the concept of "sustainable development", which harmoniously brings together the concepts of environment and development, highlighting the interrelationship between them. As my country's Minister of Foreign Affairs stated in his address to the Assembly on 25 September last:

> "the concept of sustainable development was identified as a central element that should inspire the theory and practice of development policies in the coming years." (A/47/PV.13, p. 28)

On the occasion of the Rio Conference the international public witnessed the making of a commitment on the part of the Heads of State or Government of both the North and the South to preserve the environment in which we live, while at the same time striving to achieve ever-higher levels of well-being for all peoples.

Besides the specific agreements that were reached at the Conference, namely the Rio Declaration, the adoption of Agenda 21, and the first world consensus on forests, two important legal instruments were signed there as well, namely, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

(Mr. Yañez Barnuevo, Spain)

The countries that participated in the second Ibero-American summit meeting of Heads of State or Government held in Madrid on 23 and 24 July this year agreed to take action to ensure that the commitments entered into at the Rio Conference would soon be translated into reality. In this regard those 21 countries undertook to take all necessary steps to ensure that the negotiations intended to lead to their implementation would be successful at this session of the General Assembly.

My country is prepared to contribute in the most effective way possible to the practical application of the agreements arrived at in Rio. The first step, nationally, was the setting up of an interministerial Committee in which the various departments are represented. The Committee has already begun its work of following up and implementing the agreements reached at the Conference as far as Spain's participation is concerned.

The Conventions on climate change and biological diversity signed by the President of the Spanish Government in Rio have already been referred to our parliament for ratification, which we hope will take place in the first quarter of 1993.

As far as the Convention on climate change is concerned, immediately after the Rio Conference the National Climate Commission was set up with the purpose of advising the Government concerning policy in the area of climatic change and the response strategies to be integrated into a national climate programme.

As to the Convention on Biological Diversity, I would remind members that in Rio de Janeiro my Government had already announced its offer of the City of Seville as the location for the secretariat of the Convention.

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The Spanish invitation, which has been formally delivered to the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), would include installing the secretariat free of rent and other charges in one of the best equipped pavilions of the Seville World's Fair, EXPO-92, which concluded just a few days ago.

The Spanish Government has also offered to host the first of the intergovernmental meetings of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which is to be held in the autumn of 1993 and to which Spain will be making a substantial financial contribution.

My Government is also offering to meet the costs of some secretariat staff members and to fund certain biodiversity projects to be carried out by them.

These projects could be financed either by means of setting up a separate trust fund or through a special contribution to the United Nations Environment Programme. The trust fund that we are suggesting could be used in part to fund developing countries' participation in the preparatory meetings of the intergovernmental committee of the Convention.

My Government has decided to offer Seville as the headquarters of the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. We have done so for the following reasons:

First of all, Seville is very close to the Doñana National Park, one of the major European biodiversity preserves, as well as to a number of other natural protected areas which provide exceptional opportunities for field research and pilot projects on biodiversity. By virtue of its special characteristics, Spain is one of the countries of Europe with the greatest wealth of biological diversity.

(Mr. Yañez Barnuevo, Spain)

In the second place, geographically and traditionally, like Spain itself, Seville has had close ties not only with Africa and Europe, but with the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Hence it is a fitting crossroads at which to reconcile the various concepts of biodiversity and sustainable development.

Thirdly, there is significant scientific and research capacity in the area: not only at the University of Seville, but at the Universities of Cordoba and Granada. Furthermore, a number of faculties and research centres will soon be established on the EXPO-92 premises.

This scientific and research environment, which dovetails perfectly with the specific aspects of the Convention on Biological Diversity, will be enhanced by the technological facilities that are currently being developed in the region.

A further reason is that Seville, with its new international airport and its high-speed trainlink with Madrid, is a city with very good national and international connections.

We hope that when the time comes to take the decision on the location of the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, both UNEP and the meeting of the parties on the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity will give full consideration to the Spanish offer.

Spain's concern for the environment goes hand in hand with its understanding of and commitment to development problems. In this regard, I would remind members that in the last decade Spain has tripled the amount of its assistance aid. The President of the Spanish Government stated at the Rio Conference Spain's intention of once again tripling the volume of its assistance to development in the course of this decade.

(Mr. Yañez Barnuevo, Spain)

The setting up by the General Assembly of the high-level Commission on Sustainable Development, in which my country plans to take a full, active and constructive part, will be one of the focal points of the activities of the international community in the domain of the interrelated issues of the environment and development It is essential that the work of the Commission be properly organized so as to avoid duplication with other bodies and programmes of the United Nations system, enabling it to function in the most effective manner possible.

(Mr. Yañez Barnuevo, Spain)

We believe that the Rio de Janeiro Conference was far from being the end of a process; it was in fact a point of departure by means of which the international community will do its utmost to attain higher levels of well-being for all, while respecting the environment in which we live. This is a vital task - the best legacy we can pass on to the generations to come.

Mr. ABU ODEH (Jordan) (interpretation from Arabic): It gives me great pleasure to address the General Assembly on agenda item 79, the report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, an issue that is of vital and utmost importance to the well-being of our future generations. Success in implementing the recommendations and achieving the goals set by the Conference will be a decisive step towards ensuring the continued existence of our world.

We are moving towards the end of this century and the environment of our globe remains heavily abused. Deterioration of the environment because of factors relating to development, is on the increase.

Over the past two decades, there have been several international conferences on environmental issues. Of all those conferences, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro last June has been unique in that it was the first to generate a great deal of thinking and understanding of the issues of environment and development. It has also triggered the beginnings of what we may call "ecodiplomacy". In addition, the Rio Conference has revived hope in the United Nations ability to mobilize multilateral cooperation on economic, social and environmental issues in this post-cold war era. We all have a common purpose but the road is full of obstacles and different points of view. The rapid deterioration of the environment indicates the urgent need to intensify our efforts in finding

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solutions that would serve the interests of future generations. Many commitments were made at the Earth Summit and there is no doubt that we shall face many problems in the translation of those commitments into deeds.

Effective ecodiplomacy is needed to promote multilateral cooperation for the successful implementation of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. To do so, we need to strengthen our efforts in addressing the following areas. The first area is the population explosion. No matter how careful we are and what euphemism we may use in speaking of it, we need very strenuous efforts in tackling this chronic problem before we lose the momentum that may lead us to the achievement of sustainable development. At the beginning of this century, the world's population was 1.5 billion, and in seven years time, it will be 8.5 billion. More resources have to be devoted to dealing with this problem speedily and in real earnest, for if it is not addressed in all seriousness, all our efforts to achieve a world of sustainable development will be doomed to failure. The leaders of both developing and developed countries alike are required to act swiftly and adopt measures to deal with this frightening explosion.

The second area is financing. Here we come to a question with which we are all familiar: where do we get the money needed to achieve the successful implementation of Agenda 21? At the Rio de Janeiro Summit the message addressed to the developing countries was: "Honour your commitments to Agenda 21 and you will be helped to find sufficient financial external resources". Those resources can be obtained through improved terms of trade, greater access to markets, private investment, debt relief, technical aid, and official development assistance (ODA).

The focus throughout the Rio de Janeiro Summit was on ODA and if we examine the financial requirements to implement successfully the decisions

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adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, we will find the figures to be tremendous indeed. Take just the period from now to the year 2000. In that period alone, the developing countries will need approximately $600 billion, $475 billion of which must come from the developing countries themselves while the balance of $125 billion is supposed to come from the developed countries in the form of ODA.

In view of the pressing socio-economic problems of the developing countries, the greatest concern of those countries is to increase their national incomes in order for them to be able to cope with the problem of poverty. In many developing countries, common environmental problems will continue to persist as long as the problems arising from underdevelopment continue, especially, the scarcity of food, clothing, health care, education and sanitation; hence, the imposition of such a financial burden on those countries would be to ignore their pressing problems.

When we say this, we do not call for charity diplomacy. We are merely striving for world investment in a sustainable future. Protecting the environment is not for the benefit of some but is for the benefit of all the inhabitants of the planet. We all breathe the same air and enjoy the warmth and energy of the same solar system. The depletion of the ozone layer tells us all that it is time to drastically concentrate all our energies on strengthening and enhancing cooperation between North and South.

The third area is the institutionalization of the results of the Rio Summit. Success in the implementation of the decisions and resolutions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development cannot be achieved without an institution that would monitor and follow up the implementation of the principles set forth in Agenda 21. There is no doubt that the proposed

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establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development serves that purpose. There are differences of opinions over the Commission's functions, mandate, powers and composition. My country hopes that differences between countries concerning the Commission on Sustainable Development will be resolved at this current session of the General Assembly so that we may be able to establish an institution that will be the first in the post-cold war era that may be able to cope with and walk hand in hand with the restructuring of the United Nations system in the changing world we live in, and which may generate more multilateral cooperation.

Most of my country's lands are deserts that suffer from the scarcity of water, from a high rate of population growth and from socio-economic problems. However, this has not discouraged our Government from dealing with environment protection. On the eve of the Earth Summit, my Government announced its national strategy for the protection of the environment. The strategy contains guidelines and policies on how to achieve complementarity between protection of the environment and development.

We have been able to earmark some resources for educating the rural population on issues of population growth. In addition, we have accorded special priority to educating farmers on the best techniques of productivity on the basis of environmentally sound technologies. In this respect, we have been able to attract the participation of non-governmental organizations in policy-making and in educating the public. We believe in public participation, including that of intellectuals, scientists, and entrepreneurs. In this respect, the Government accorded special attention to the industrial sector. Laws and regulations on the protection of the environment have been enacted. Efficient standards and charges have been designed in line with international criteria.

(Mr. Abu Odeh, Jordan)

My country reiterates its commitment to the decisions of the Earth Summit, and to international conventions, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. My country's opinions on the Commission on Sustainable Development and the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council are reflected in the views of the Group of 77, of which we are a member.

We have left behind the cold war era and have rid ourselves of the nightmare of nuclear confrontation. We have now entered upon an era of peace and increased international cooperation. The world agenda is full of the priorities which will shape all aspects of life on this planet. If we have learned that wars and destruction are the surest way to extinction, we must realize now that socio-economic prosperity is the only way to survival. All forms of damage to and abuse of the environment are piling up and are serving final notice on mankind to stop and reconsider its priorities. The time has come for us to work together within the United Nations system. We have to rebuild a United Nations that can promote dialogue conducive to multilateral cooperation and to do away with the imbalances that lead to confrontation. We have to narrow the gap between North and South. We have to get rid of the disparities that have haunted us for generations. Bridging the gap is the only way we can attain multilateral cooperation built on a solid foundation that can lead us to the right path for a sustainable future.

Theoretically, the proposed Commission on Sustainable Development is the vehicle by which we may devote the concerted efforts of North and South to coping with our common task. We strongly believe that the structure of the Commission should reflect the balance required to ensure solid cooperation between developed and developing countries. The privileges enjoyed by the

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industrialized world must be counter-balanced by reasonable participation on the part of the South while taking into account the challenges the industrialized countries will have to face up to in this respect. What is at issue here is a common concern for us all, regardless of the development level of any of our countries. What is at issue is no less than man's survival on this planet.

Sustainable development in its deeper sense is the question of man's relationship with nature. Yet it is also the question of man's relationship with man. The many components that constitute sustainable development involve as many actors, including environmentalists, governments, scientists, industrialists, interest groups and others. In order to achieve a harmonious relationship between man and nature, it is man's duty to create such harmony. Nature has the upper hand and can always respond appropriately to man's actions. It cannot be fooled.

We have come out of the Rio Summit with an agreement. So, let us do our best to translate that agreement into a commitment that will endure for the sake of our children who will inherit the future.

Mr. GAMBARI (Nigeria): I should like to associate the delegation of Nigeria with the sentiments of gratitude and appreciation conveyed to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his very comprehensive report (A/47/598) "Institutional arrangements to follow up the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development". We are also grateful to the Rapporteur-General for his introduction of the report on the Rio Summit.

We cannot fail to reiterate our sincere gratitude to Mr. Maurice Strong and his able secretariat for their efficiency and professionalism in the discharge of their functions during the UNCED preparatory process and the Earth Summit itself. We wish to place on record

(Mr. Gambari, Nigeria)

our appreciation to the Government and the people of Brazil for the excellent manner in which they hosted the Conference.

My delegation would like to associate itself fully with the statement and introduction of the representative of Pakistan, who spoke on behalf of the Group of 77, and to commend the various proposals to all countries, developed and developing alike, for speedy attention.

The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro last June has indeed drawn attention to the fact that, as we approach a new century, the environment represents a new factor that must be integrated into development. Consequently, the major message from Rio is that without environmental protection, lasting development is impossible.

The success of the Rio Summit thus lies in a reaffirmation of the universal acknowledgment that the environment is the common concern of all mankind and that its problems should be addressed through multilateral cooperation, based on common but differentiated responsibilities, common endeavours and a balanced perspective. Such cooperation should ensure that the protection of the environment, economic growth and development and the eradication of poverty are mutually reinforcing. The Rio Summit achieved its cardinal objectives, namely, raising awareness at the highest political level and laying the foundation for global partnership in the attainment of sustainable development by adopting Agenda 21,

The Federal Republic of Nigeria, along with numerous other countries, duly signed the two important legal instruments opened for signature in Rio de Janeiro - the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. We have since taken the necessary steps to deposit the instruments of ratification of the two Conventions. We call on all Member States to ratify those Conventions. On the implementation of the UNCED

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recommendations, our President, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, has approved the strengthening of Nigeria's Federal Environmental Protection Agency in order to enable it to coordinate Nigeria's programme on sustainable development. The Ecological Fund, which was 1 per cent of the Federal Account, has been increased to 2 per cent to provide additional finances from local resources. A high-powered cross-sectoral Advisory Committee has also been set up to work out the National Action Programme for implementing Agenda 21. A Sub-Committee on Capacity-Building is already working to define the requirements for ensuring adequate endogenous capacity for implementing all the programmes of Agenda 21.

The Rio Summit was unequivocal on the issue of responsiblities and resources. The industrial countries have primary responsibility for addressing global environment problems caused, in large part, by them. The richer countries also need to solve their own environmental problems first, and they possess the technology to protect the environment through better resource management. By sharing this knowledge with developing countries and backing it with financial support, they can help developing countries meet their environmental challenges while speeding up development.

For us in Africa, the recommendation of the Earth Summit to provide for an international convention to combat desertification further enhanced the global agenda for this new partnership. As members will recall, Nigeria was the spokesman for Africa during the UNCED negotiations, and our delegation therefore looks forward to discussing the details for the establishment of the intergovernmental negotiating committee. We hope that this session of the General Assembly will establish the intergovernmental negotiating committee and mandate it to begin taking action in early 1993 and complete its negotiations by June 1994, as requested by the Rio Summit.

(Mr. Gambari, Nigeria)

Nigeria agrees with the Secretary-General that institutional arrangements to follow up UNCED should be innovative, avoid duplication and contribute to the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations system in the economic, social and related fields. In this regard, our delegation would like to draw attention to chapter 38 of Agenda 21, which contains specific recommendations for enhancing and strengthening the future work of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Specifically, UNEP's responsibility is defined as including the following:

> "Further development of international environmental law, in particular conventions and guidelines, promotion of its implementation, and coordinating functions arising from an increasing number of international legal agreements, inter alia, the functioning of the secretariats of the Conventions, taking into account the need for the most efficient use of resources, including possible co-location of secretariats established in the future". (A/CONF.151/26 (vol. III), para. 38.22 (h))

In view of the experience gained by UNEP in following up and coordinating implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification prepared by the United Nations Conference on Desertification, held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1977, and in the context of the UNCED position I have quoted, the Nigerian Government strongly supports designating UNEP as the secretariat of the intergovernmental negotiating committee with regard to combating desertification.

Furthermore, we endorse and commend the Capacity 21 initiative undertaken by UNDP and call on both developed and developing countries to provide the much needed financial support to assist the speedy formulation of national

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capacity-building requirements for the implementation not only of Agenda 21 but also of the Conventions.

Another issue that is important to my delegation relates to the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. In our opinion the Declaration, albeit a valuable and important first step, should immediately be followed up by a more inspirational and legally progressive "Earth Charter". We propose that such a charter should be adopted during the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations in 1995. This would require that the General Assembly at the current session set up an appropriate mechanism for the negotiation of this important Earth-binding charter.

My delegation identifies fully with the Secretary-General's recommendations on the following matters: the procedural and organizational modalities for the high-level Commission on Sustainable Development; the inter-agency coordination arrangements to follow up UNCED; the role of the Administrative Committee on Coordination; the high-level advisory body on sustainable development; and the Secretariat support structure. We look forward especially to receiving further specific organizational modalities for the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development and to suggestions as to how such work would be related to the mandate of the regional commissions.

In conclusion, the post-Rio success of UNCED rests with Governments, it depends on their commitment to it and the political leadership they are willing to give in a sustainable, predictable and timely manner. This involves a commitment to achieving sustainability in the national context and giving strong direction to the United Nations system in a global context while assisting it in the next phases of the implementation of the engagements universally and collectively made in Rio de Janeiro.

Mr. SENILOLI (Fiji): I welcome this opportunity to participate in our debate on this important agenda item. I wish to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his very comprehensive and thoughtful opening statement on Monday. I wish also to thank the Rapporteur-General, the Foreign Minister of Algeria, for his report and particularly for reminding us all of the important decisions that were taken at Rio.

The landmark agreements reached at the historic Rio Conference, convened five months ago, have established the basic framework for future initiatives on a wide range of environment and development issues. It is now incumbent on all nations, large and small, rich and poor, to work closely along the lines of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) has set out to ensure that the two years of difficult negotiations and the agreements reached are converted into constructive action. Only concerted action on all fronts and at all levels can secure a sustainable future for present and future generations of the world community.

The United Nations, we believe, is a unique setting for ensuring that ecological concerns assume their rightful place in economic decision-making, both nationally and internationally. At the political level it provides, by virtue of its universal membership, a forum for developing common approaches and strategies. On the technical level, it constitutes a vast pool of expertise in all areas equipped to deal most effectively with the complex problem of integrating environmental concerns into development policy and priorities.

The primary responsibility for the implementation of the decisions taken at the Rio Conference will, however, rest with our national Governments. Agenda 21 requires that we develop our own national plans for sustainable

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development, taking into account our national and global priorities as well as environmental and economic goals. It further asks that we should have our plans reviewed by scientists, technicians and other experts, and should invite suggestions and inputs from all our people.

Two years ago my country took a major decision to undertake a thorough review of our environment situation. I am pleased to say that this review has now been completed and a draft National Environmental Strategy (NES) has been formulated. Our Ministry of Environment is now in the process of incorporating the views and comments received from a wide cross-section of our community. Once it is finalized, the NES will provide us with a framework for guiding the management of our environment and natural resources. It will also help to ensure that our country's development is pursued on a sustainable basis and that our ecologically sensitive areas are protected.

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At the international level, the Rio Conference recommended the establishment of a high-level United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development to function as a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council. The Secretary-General in his statement on 2 November related to us his views on the structure, administration and staffing of this Commission in the context of his overall efforts to revitalize the United Nations system and the Secretariat. My delegation commends him for his useful proposals and thoughts on organizing effective follow-up to UNCED.

The Commission on Sustainable Development, we feel, should be the main forum for ensuring effective follow-up of all activities and decisions relating to the implementation of Agenda 21 at the global, regional and national levels. We agree that the Commission work should not be limited to the review of progress in implementing Agenda 21. Apart from keeping Agenda 21 under review, the Commission should also adjust and update it in the light of new developments that have an impact on its implementation. It should have a dynamic leadership role on all matters relating to the environment.

The Commission should devise effective mechanisms to ensure that there is coordination and that any wasteful duplication of effort is avoided. My delegation welcomes the setting-up of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development. We believe that this Committee can greatly assist the Commission on Sustainable Development in coordinating the implementation of Agenda 21 at the international level.

Regarding the Commission's membership, we see obvious benefits in keeping it small, provided all countries and geographical regions are equitably

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represented. We also see a clear need to ensure that participation in the meetings is at a sufficiently high level. As regards the venue, we propose that the Commission meet in New York, as this would enable a greater number of small States to participate fully in its activities.

We are aware that several intergovernmental agencies of the United Nations have already taken the lead in examining Agenda 21 and have started to develop plans to implement activities with a direct bearing on their own areas of specialization. This is most encouraging. My delegation believes that it is important that the Commission be established as soon as possible so that it can begin its substantive work as early as possible and, as expected, provide the necessary guidance to the work of other United Nations agencies in this important field.

Ocean and marine resources were a divisive issue at UNCED. For small island nations like Fiji, the coastal regions and the oceans are the focus of most social and economic activity. A number of coral atolls depend entirely on the oceans for their sustenance and livelihood. The oceans programme of Agenda 21 is therefore for us one of the most important items agreed in the UNCED process. UNCED recognized the small island States as ecologically sensitive areas, and a special programme has been developed under the heading "Protection of the oceans" to address the sustainable development of islands. UNCED agreed to include in Agenda 21 the convening of a global conference on the sustainable development of small island developing States, to be held in 1993. We hope that this conference will not only highlight problems which are now so widely known, but also, most importantly, suggest practical measures and means to overcome our vulnerability and disadvantages.

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Because of the importance of oceans and the resources they contain, Fiji has supported, and will continue strongly to support, calls for the utilization of fisheries resources based on sound environmental principles. We are pleased that Fiji was one of the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention on the Law of the Sea. We strongly urge all countries to ratify this important Convention.

The UNCED process saw very long and difficult negotiations on high seas fisheries. Fiji joined a number of countries in supporting the principles that would provide for an effective regime to conserve and manage the living resources on the high seas. We are pleased that the Conference resolved to hold an intergovernmental conference under United Nations auspices to consider ways and means of promoting effective implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on straddling fish stocks and highly migratory species. Fiji looks forward to participating in this conference and its preparatory meetings.

In view of the importance that we attach to this subject, we would like to see the conference convened next year. It should identify and assess existing problems related to the conservation and management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks, consider means of improving fisheries cooperation, formulate recommendations and urge States to implement and respect them.

Follow-up of the Agenda 21 sections dealing with environmentally sound management of waste is also of major importance to Fiji. While we generally accepted and approved the provisions in Agenda 21 for the handling of waste, we feel that the question of the illegal dumping of waste materials of all types has not been satisfactorily dealt with in existing treaties.

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The Pacific is a vast area of ocean dotted with very small islands, many of them uninhabited. The temptation to use the Pacific islands and the sea is irresistible and will continue to be so unless there are clear deterrents. The sanctions on the dumping of toxic and other wastes are becoming stronger in other parts of the world. Consequently, the pressure on these areas which are difficult to police and which are not covered by unequivocal conventions against dumping, is going to be stronger. In this regard, Fiji prefers that stronger action be taken through Agenda 21, and especially through the work of the proposed Commission on Sustainable Development.

The adoption of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and its resolve to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, if taken seriously, will help avoid problems of catastrophic proportions by preventing the complete disappearance of some of our small island and coastal States from the face of the Earth. Moreover, there is already evidence to suggest that the greenhouse effect is also resulting in increasing severity and frequency of tropical storms, thus making our small island countries ever more vulnerable. We are greatly encouraged by the large number of countries that have now signed the Convention, and commend those that have also now ratified it. We urge all countries to ratify it as soon as possible to allow the Conference of Parties to begin its work on more substantive matters.

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While we, like many other countries, are not entirely satisfied with all the provisions contained in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, we believe it is an important first step towards orienting future actions by all parties. It is, as the name suggests, a framework for further elaboration, one that can evolve positively as new and more definite scientific evidence becomes available and as the economic benefits of actions to protect the climate become better appreciated. It is important to move decisively at this time into the first phase of implementation. We must act now, before it is too late, and be guided by the widely shared view that when faced with risks that are menacing and most likely irreversible, uncertainty argues strongly in favour of prudent action and against complacency.

Finally, we are convinced that the outcome of UNCED represented an important awakening and a sharp rise in the level of awareness about mankind's prospects on a planet that is endangered by environmental degradation. It also brought home to all of us the need to secure, for present and future generations, the benefits of sound and sustainable development. Concerted actions on all fronts will be necessary to ensure that the gains made at Rio are not lost. The setting up of the Commission on Sustainable Development is indeed a top priority, and we must work towards making this Commission operational as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.